

A Basic Working Bibliography in Mass Culture

Chuck Kleinhans, Sept. 86

Periodicals

The following periodicals often contain articles and reviews which provide a radical analysis of mass culture.

The Guardian. NY based weekly left newspaper. Carries reviews, occasional longer essays.

In These Times. Chicago based weekly left newspaper. Carries reviews, frequent longer essays.

Radical America. Stresses labor and grass roots issues with a general socialist perspective. In the late 60s-early 70s ran considerable material on mass culture. Vol. 18 no.6: special issue on culture and youth.

Tabloid. [ceased publication?] Concerned with developing a non-elitist analysis of mass culture from a left and feminist perspective.

Social Text. Draws mostly on literary culture. See first issue for general orientation.

Fuse. Best Canadian cultural magazine. Reports, reviews, and analytic articles with emphasis on youth and subculture activity. Occasional institutional analysis.

Border/lines. New Canadian cultural magazine. Somewhat academic and trendy, but clearly committed to serious analysis.

Socialist Review. Somewhat academic post-New Left orientation with some occasional interest in mass culture.

Screen (and earlier, Screen Education). British theoretical and analytic publication, best known for its pioneering work in film studies, but carries considerable material on mass culture (esp. Screen Ed.)

Working Papers in Cultural Studies. Although it has ceased publication, this journal was a vital pioneering publication in the 70s, reflecting the work of the "Birmingham group" which followed the initial lines of inquiry of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall.

Media, Culture, and Society. Similar in some aspects to WPCS, but tends to mass communications approaches. Often hostile to semiotics and critical and qualitative analysis.

Theory, Culture, and Society. Similar to MC&S but open to semiotics and critical studies, new influences, etc.

Cultural Correspondance. Ceased publication, but took a generally anarchist line on mass culture, socialist culture, etc. in the 70s. Especially good when enthusiastic: e.g., radical approval of Ernie Kovacs, Sgt. Bilko.

Jump Cut. Mostly film orientation with a strong socialist and feminist analysis.

New German Critique. Very academic presentations of various W. German theoretical positions, esp. in the wake of the Frankfurt School. Occasional interesting case studies, e.g., reception of the Holocaust tv series in Germany.

Film Reader. Issue 5 contained various articles on cultural studies.

Books.

one: postwar trends.

David Manning White and Bernard Rosenberg. Mass Culture in America. A classic 50s anthology on the subject. The best single overview of the postwar debate on mass culture.

Norman Jacobs. Culture for the Millions? Mass Media in Modern Society. A good collection of conference presentations by the liberal establishment of the late 50s: a perfect benchmark of positions and policy options.

Daniel Boorstin. *The Image*. Classic late 50s liberal analysis of mass media and merchandised America.

Reuel Denney. *The Astonished Muse*. Far and away the best postwar era US liberal analysis of mass culture. Understands mass culture as both a sociological and aesthetic phenomenon.

Robert Washow. *The Immediate Experience*. Postwar liberal analysis of mass culture with classic essays on the Gangster and Western genres. Full of quaint anti-communism.

Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel. *The Popular Arts*. Early 60s British attempt to discuss the subject and introduce it into the curriculum. Stresses "discrimination" between "good" and "bad" mass culture (which seems largely based on the writers' personal taste).

Russel Nye. *The Unembarrassed Muse*. A social history of the popular arts in the U.S. Especially useful as overview and reference.

Marshall McLuhan. *The Mechanical Bride*. Interesting and somewhat snotty analysis of 40s advertising.

Vance Packard. *The Hidden Persuaders*. Popular and somewhat overly dramatic expose of the intentions of ad agency folks. Tends to give them more credit than they deserve, but interesting.

Roland Barthes. *Mythologies*. Short essays on diverse popular culture products and processes with a longer essay on popular "myth"--what Marxists call "ideology."

Gillo Dorfles. *Kitsch*. Collection of essays, mostly European, on the lowest end of mass culture. Heavily illustrated, fun to skim.

Leo Lowenthal. *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*. Various essays by a general follower of the Frankfurt School.

Harold Mendelsohn. *Mass Entertainment*. A very nicely done review of the issues and literature of the postwar period.

Herbert Marcuse. *One Dimensional Man*. The logical extension of Adorno's pessimism applied to 60s America. Very influential on the New Left's analysis of culture.

two: more recent studies.

Herbert J. Gans. *Popular Culture and High Culture*. A liberal sociologist's overview of the issues, generally stressing pluralism as a value and offering policy options. Raises lots of issues that Marxists don't like to deal with because they are sticky--like working class taste. Essential reading for all radicals to keep them honest.

George Lipsitz. *Class and Culture in Cold War America: "A Rainbow at Midnight"*. Excellent study of rank and file labor militancy in the war and post war period in the US and the severe government repression of it. Includes excellent analyses of film noir (Ulmer's *Detour*), the roller derby, and the class origins of rock 'n' roll.

Bruce Brown. *Marx, Freud, and the Critique of Everyday Life*. A good overview of the Marx-Freud encounter in Wilhelm Reich, Marcuse, and Henri Lefebvre which provides a good background for understanding why daily life has become an important issue in radical analysis.

Richard Dyer. *Stars*. The best analysis of film stars by the critic who changed everyone's way of thinking about the subject.

Tania Modeleski. *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women*. An excellent analysis of soaps, harlequins, and gothic novels and how and why they appeal to women's fantasies.

John G. Cawelti. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*. A fine example of cultural analysis of very popular literary forms. though not overtly political, the quality of the analysis is very instructive.

part three: popular music

Charles Keil. *Urban Blues*. Classic sociological analysis of the movement from rural to urban blues, changing relation to audience of the performer, etc.

Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo. *Rock 'n' Roll is Here to Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry*. Pioneering industrial/financial analysis of rock c. mid-70s.

John Sinclair. *Guitar Army*. Classic collection of mid-60s revolutionary counter culture by the Detroit/Ann Arbor guru and rock promoter whose political program was "dope, rock 'n' roll, and fucking in the streets."

Simon Frith. *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*. Major analysis by British critic.

Iain Chambers. *Urban Rhythms: Pop Music and Popular Culture*. Analysis of post war British rock to the present.

Ellen Willis. *Beginning to See the Light*. US rock critic offers speculations on its significance.